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DE RUEHKG #0232 0841152  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 251152Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7438  
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0560  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0554  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 2359  
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM J7 MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 000232

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR (ACADIEUX, WSMITH, VDEPIRRO)  
INR/IAA (GBOHIGIAN)  
TREASURY FOR IA/WH (ERIN NEPHEW)  
PASS TO CENTRAL AMERICAN CARIBBEAN COLLECTIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/24/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [KCOR](#) [CARICOM](#) [IBRD](#)  
IDB, CDB, JM, XL  
SUBJECT: JAMAICA: RULING LABOUR PARTY (JLP) CANDIDATE  
EASILY WINS WEST PORTLAND BY-ELECTION

REF: A. KINGSTON 221 (202028Z MAR 09)  
[1](#)B. KINGSTON 156 (272047Z FEB 09)  
[1](#)C. 08 KINGSTON 1034 (091429Z DEC 08)  
[1](#)D. 08 KINGSTON 494 (301353Z MAY 08)  
[1](#)E. 08 KINGSTON 409 (091742Z MAY 08)  
[1](#)F. 08 KINGSTON 398 (071203Z MAY 08)  
[1](#)G. 08 KINGSTON 364 (291558Z APR 08)  
[1](#)H. 08 KINGSTON 310 (141908Z APR 08)  
[1](#)I. 07 KINGSTON 1336 (042044Z SEP 07)  
[1](#)J. 08 KINGSTON 837 (222015Z SEP 08)

Classified By: CDA JAMES T. HEG, Reasons 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1.(SBU) Ruling Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) candidate Daryl Vaz easily defeated the opposition People's National Party (PNP)'s Kenneth Rowe in a key by-election in the district of West Portland on March 23. Vaz now will retake his seat in Parliament, thus preserving the JLP's narrow 31-28 majority. He captured 7,915 votes, or 58 percent of the total, to Rowe's 5,626, or 41 percent of the total, with a handful of votes going to the Rastafarian candidate Astor Black. As noted reftel (A), such a convincing win in West Portland should put the JLP in a stronger position in three other districts in which, as a result of ongoing legal challenges (reftels), sitting JLP Members-of-Parliament (MPs) may face by-elections in coming months:

-- North East St. Ann (Shahine Robinson);  
-- North East St. Catherine (Gregory Mair);  
-- and North West Clarendon (Michael Stern).

Reactions from Leadership  
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2.(SBU) Prime Minister (PM) Bruce Golding, his cabinet, and other senior JLP officials had campaigned tirelessly on Vaz's behalf in West Portland over the last two weeks. For her part, the charismatic Opposition Leader Portia Simpson Miller (PSM) had maintained a high-profile on Rowe's behalf, going door-to-door throughout the district. Although limited to one of Jamaica's smaller constituencies, the contest clearly had taken on national dimensions. Speaking after the results had been announced, Golding thanked the people of West Portland "for the resolve they have shown," and said "the PNP must now hug up to the results of the elections." Speaking on national radio on March 24, PNP General Secretary Peter Bunting attributed the PNP's defeat to "a number of factors," including "the short time-frame of the campaign." On the

same program, JLP Minister of Industry and Commerce Karl Samuda extolled his party's "impeccable organization, confidence, and positive image" which had led to victory.

#### The JLP's Momentum

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3.(C) Samuda has a point: in three successive contests ) the September, 2007 national election, subsequent local elections, and now the West Portland by-election ) the JLP has employed organizational skills and media savvy to secure victories, while the PNP has relied almost entirely on PSM's charisma to attract voters. In North East St. Catherine and North West Clarendon, the JLP's support base may not be as strong as in West Portland; however, for the moment the party clearly has momentum on its side.

HEG